



The First Two Woes

Revelation 9:1-21



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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Main Idea: God gives judgment on the sinful but gives grace to those who are in Christ Jesus.

In the first four trumpets, the earth endured the punishment for the sin with a third of the world being wiped out. The earth felt the effects of sin which cannot withstand God's judgment. Through the initial actions of Adam and Eve and our continued sin, we subject the earth to the judgment of God that undoubtedly will not go unnoticed by the people. After these trumpets, the angel delivered a solemn warning of what was to come; woe to those who dwell on the earth. For the next two trumpets, mankind receives the beginning of their judgment for their sin and rebellion. God takes the issue of sin extremely serious. Sin is unholy rebellion against the things of God and goes against our intended creation of how God made the world to function. Hence, the first act of God to repair the effects of sin came in the form of sending Jesus Christ to die as the lamb of God to take away the sins of the mankind. Now, those who have not put their trust and faith in Jesus Christ stand condemned by their own sins which God deals with severely. They are unfit to stand in the presence of God by merit of their own unholy actions. With the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpet, those who persist to follow other gods will find themselves experiencing the fullness of God's judgment, but they are not outside of the reach of the hand of Jesus Christ to provide grace.

The Fifth Trumpet, The First Woe

At the blast of the fifth trumpet, we are introduced to the Spiritual realm's judgment on sin. An angel, having fallen from heaven, opens the bottomless pit to pour of judgment on the people of the world. Possibly, this angel is none other than the devil himself whom God grants permission to open the bottomless pit. The word for fallen does not describe a mere descending, which Jesus Christ did, but rather a destruction and perishing after having been cast down from heaven. John presents a frightening image

of what pours out of the bottomless pit, but ultimately, the fifth trumpet/first woe is reserved for those who have not received the seal of God. Despite the continued pain, they will seek death rather than restoration, but death will remain elusive. Death will come at the appointed time that God determines. Death is the consequence of sin but it is not outside of the reign of God. Choosing to remain in sin drags a person through a life of pain as our bodies were not intended to live in the corruption that sin brings. The lamb of God is still present throughout this entire process, allowing people to come to Him for their salvation rather than face the unyielding pain and torment for our sins.

Out of the bottomless pit came a swarm of locusts, outfitted for war and for battle. Their crowns a representation of the authority given to them. Yet, this swarm of locusts was no ordinary swarm. Likely a reference to the Greek God Apollo with the sign of the locust, whom the Emperor Domitian believed he embodied, the locust represented a ravaging of the planet. These locusts however, do not ravage the earth, but the people upon it. They represent the instrument of destruction, hurting those who rebel against God, all under their ruler and king, Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek. Many scholars seem to think that the king over the bottomless pit represents Lucifer, the fallen angel having been cast down from heaven and setting up his false kingdom, granting crowns to even the locusts. This would explain the nature of the wrath poured out on humanity who chose to rebel against God and initially align themselves with destruction. Apollyon/Abaddon essentially refers to the embodiment of destruction. Whether this person is the fallen angel Lucifer or an angel acting as the hand of judgment for God, it is clear that they are under the sovereign rule of the Throne Room of Heaven. No one escapes the judgment of God but only whether or not they bear the seal of God in their lives.

The Sixth Trumpet, The Second Woe

The the sixth trumpet let out its loud cry and the second woe came to the earth. Possibly these four angels are the same from Revelation 7:1, although the text is unclear and opinions on this are divided. Their identities notwithstanding, the four angels

moved to action, delivering the judgment of God on the sin of the people. Like many of the previous trumpets, one third of creation felt the effects of their judgment. Where the locusts were told they could not kill the people, the angels did not have any such restrictions. Their coming is not weak or simple but they come with a profound and mighty force behind them. In the wake of the locust army which devastated the world, the effects of this judgment are felt by humanity. The army consists of thousands of war horses, strong and outfitted for war. Judgment takes the form of fire, sulfur, and smoke exuding from the head and tail of the horse. Woe to anyone who experiences the agonizing pain of the judgment of sin.

And yet, those seeing the plagues and woes being poured out on the world still persist in their sin. At the end of the sixth seal in Revelation 6, the people enduring the fullness of God's wrath by His presence did not repent but rather wished for death as an alternative. Even now, as the evidence of God's presence and the enactment of His justice is ever present, the people still refuse to turn from their sin and seek forgiveness by repentance. As John describes those who do not seek forgiveness, it seems to imply that mankind still at this point has the option to repent. If we had reached the point of no return then it would be cruel to even mention this. Instead, John paints an image of those who have every indication of the hand of God but a refusal to acknowledge His Lordship. Perhaps even the locusts provided an opportunity to come to God as nothing else remained. Often times it takes reaching rock bottom before we understand that, in Christ, we have all we need. In the face of this woe, the grace of God does not depart from the people and His righteous hand reaches out to save mankind. God understands the severity of justice that must be upheld due to man's sin but lavishes grace upon mankind by offering redemption from our sins through Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

- Where do you see the sovereignty of God in this chapter? What does it say about the power of God that even the fallen angels must obey and submit to God?
- How would you respond to the image of the locusts in the fifth seal? What qualities do they have that are the most concerning?
- What is sin? Why is sin appealing? Why can God not allow the sin of people to go unpunished? How do justice and grace balance each other in the person of Jesus Christ?
- Where do you see the grace of God in this chapter? How does God display His love for His people while simultaneously pronouncing judgment on the world?
- How does this passage display God's viewpoint of sin? What does God allow or do as a response to the sin in the world?
- Why do people continue to persist in sin despite the evidence of what sin is doing in a person's life? When have you done this?
- Why should we refuse to allow sin to run rampant in our lives? What effects would this have in for our spiritual well-being? What does God offer in the place of sin?
- What can we do to deal with our sins? What do you need from others in the way of support for giving up and staying true to the life God intends for us?